

for the Reverend D. D. with the respectful compliments of the author.

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S E R M O N,

OCCASIONED BY

THE DEATH OF

The Hon. LADY WINNINGTON,

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH of STANFORD-UPON-TEME,

IN WORCESTERSHIRE,

DECEMBER 21st, 1794.

By the Rev. GEORGE BUTT, D. D.

CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY, RECTOR OF STANFORD,
AND VICAR OF KIDDERMINSTER.

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with the respectful compliments
of the author

S E R M O N

ON

THE BAPTIST

THE HOLY BAPTISM

AND THE BAPTIST CHURCH

IN THE UNITED STATES

OF AMERICA

BY

DR. GEORGE W. WATSON

OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH

IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

AND

NEW YORK

S E R M O N.

REVELATION i. 17, 18.

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.

*And he laid his right hand upon me, saying
unto me, Fear not ; I am the first and the
last :*

*I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and behold,
I am alive for evermore, Amen : and have
the keys of hell and of death.*

THE passage of holy scripture, which I have chosen for our present consideration, teaches us, that the prophetic Apostle, seeing our Lord and Saviour in a vision, fell at his feet as dead :—an effect to be expected from such a presence, from so august a spectacle. We then receive the most pathetic and sublime description of the universal

Redeemer, of his divine humility, power, and goodness. For he is represented as laying his right hand on the prostrated Apostle; as saying unto him, fear not; and, as asserting, that he was the first and the last, that he was once alive, and was dead, but was now alive again, and for evermore. By the following term, Amen, so be it, man *seems* admonished to rejoice in the preceding information, as he well may, since our Lord adds this declaration, that he had the keys of hell and death.

The original expression, translated by the term hell, imports not the state of future punishment which succeeds to the day of judgment, but the place of unembodied spirits during their existence before it.

Now whether we dread annihilation by death, or view this event as the means of transporting us into some future state of unimaginable and awful conditions, we must rejoice to learn, to learn from our Lord himself, that He is *the first and the last*, and that He, who is our Saviour and Mediator, and therefore our greatest benefactor, possesses *the keys of hell and death*.

Christianity,

Christianity, as an act of divine grace, or as a revelation of the divine will, enables and instructs us to triumph over the grave.—Not to think of death is unnatural, is folly, is the very madness of levity: as Christians we may provide against all its worst evils, we may defy it, we may rejoice in it.

When we think what death is, and to what it may lead, it is surprising, it is alarmingly astonishing, that the thoughts of this event are not the most frequent thoughts of man:—you would suppose that they would be as inseparable from his mind, and be so interwoven with every other subject of his attention, as at least to have such a kind of alliance with it as the light has with every object beheld by it. Things seen with this associating idea of death, would be seen according to the truth; we should derive from it an instruction, an admonition, an awakening charge to separate the possessions of Time from those of Eternity. Thus our souls would be diverted from their usual pursuits, and released from their usual dependences; we should act under the best moral light, and fall into those sentiments, and admit only those passions which

as

as to their objects and degrees would stand the test of it. God and his rewards would then become all in all to us, and through holy Hope we should know that peace which the world cannot give.

And surely Reason points us to this haven whenever we think on the wrecks of Death, on the generations of men gathered to their fathers, on the turf-raised graves of the poor, on the stately monuments and mausoleums of the rich and powerful;—whenever we think that the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak, the learned and the ignorant, the child of ethereal genius and the senseless idiot, the unnoticed and the man of most renown in his day, must all alike tread the one path which leads to the grave.

And is there not enough, O mortal men, in this view of our universal destination, to impress us with such conceptions of this life as should release us from its chains, force upon us the most lively sense of its vanity, and compel us so far to assert the dignity of our nature, as to govern it by the exactest principles of reason, and exalt it with the noblest

noblest graces, aims, and aspirations which can arise from Religion?

When so many avenues, which lead to the valley of Death, continually present it to our reason, our imagination, and our passions, we must be dead ourselves in sin not to fly from its horrors into *His* protection and service who holds *the keys of hell and death*, and hath brought life and immortality to light.

Whether we consider the human body itself, either in its internal or external perils, what do we see, feel, and imagine, but a delicate machine so fearfully constructed, as to yield us no ground of confidence in setting death at defiance (otherwise than by a life of virtue) for one day, one hour, one moment.

The strength and beauty of youth, alas! will ye confide in them? no, ye have too often seen that in them there is little security against the inroads of Death:—his emissaries, the fever and consumption, here so continually spread their havock, that being weak, even in this our strongest quarter, we are pathetically admonished to consider nothing so uncertain as the continuance of life.

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That it is so often prolonged by modest temperance, manly activity, and well-regulated passion, as to encourage us in cultivating these promising means of health, is nevertheless no reason that we should be *confident* in the hopes of enjoying this effect of them; a thousand accidents may break this glass which we have made so strong, pure, and apt for lasting.

Review a few years past, and all Europe was rejoicing beneath the healing wings of Peace; but how is the scene changed at this time! and what, think ye, is the situation of those countries where War rages with all his horrors? I speak not of the ravaged fields and villages, of the mighty carcases of once flourishing cities, but would refer your thoughts to the thousands and tens of thousands of both sexes that are now blended with the dust in consequence of this unforeseen calamity, the work of human will and depravity.

Death too employs the lightnings, the tempests, the noxious vapours of nature as his instruments of destruction. Whole cities are sometimes overwhelmed by the fiery volcano, or shook into ruin (as in our times) by the convulsions of the earth; and sometimes man

is taught the majesty of God, when he forbids his clouds to drop down fatness in the kindly shower, and commissions Famine to desolate the nations ; or, changing his form of penal visitation, blackens the heavens, blots out the sun, and pours down on the earth the floods that lay waste its inhabitants with their works, spreading over wide portions of it unwholesome damps, and pestilential vapours.

Every element, of which this our terrestrial habitation is compacted, is occasionally employed for the destruction of its inhabitants. No wonder therefore that living here, *in the midst of such a life we are in death.*

Our home here, is as a slight tent amidst the whirlwinds of the African desert; it cannot last long at the longest, and, it may be destroyed at a moment before its feeble texture would of itself have fallen into pieces.

An instance of this cannot but immediately be presented to your minds in the great loss which we have recently sustained, by the premature death of one, who, what she wanted in fulness of years, supplied in the amplest abundance

abundance of those superior honours which are the fruits of the most eminent virtue.

Few are the days which are past since we had no reason to expect this calamitous blow ! her existence then was endeared to her by the most propitious circumstances of noble birth, affluence, conjugal felicity, promising children, a happy household, numerous, affectionate, and flourishing relations and friends, an affectionate and admiring neighbourhood, by the blessings of the poor, an elegant person, bright faculties of understanding, the most amiable temper, the best principles and habits, and the privilege of reviewing a well-spent life :—such but a few days ago she was, and now, on a sudden, she has no concern in any thing done under the sun, she is gathered to the myriads and myriads of the dead, whose connexion with this life is dissolved.—Smitten so suddenly by such a blow we cannot but bewail the dire power of death, we cannot but be disposed to own the vanities of this world, to think very seriously upon the more awful conditions of human nature, and must find our souls now more than ever susceptible of moral and religious impressions.

But

But if such is their state, I know not how I can better take advantage of it, and gratify at the same time our tender veneration of this excellent person, than by attempting such a delineation of her exemplary character as my small compass of time and abilities admits.

Though it is an easy office to express in plain words *well-known* truth, yet where there is, as surely there is now, more praise-worthy matter than I have now the means to lay before you, it is difficult to choose that portion of it, the review of which might be most profitable to ourselves, and honourable to our deceased friend. I must therefore, I perceive, and indeed, alas! *feel*, content myself with noticing, without art and method, the virtues of this admirable woman in the order that they readily present themselves to my mind.

However her noble birth might stimulate her to act nobly, it never excited in her any sentiment of pride; and she was often heard to declare, with an instructive sensibility, "that men were to be most valued and honoured for their virtue." These being her sentiments, we cannot wonder at her frequent personal attendance on the poor, at the tears

she would often shed on their account, and at the tears which they now shed, I was going to say, on her's. All inferior persons of desert, or in distress, that were known to her, and whom she could serve or relieve, ever found her so ready to do the one or the other, that it was apparent she had the largest heart of beneficence imaginable. This is alone the true nobility; no wonder therefore that her inferiors of all descriptions, to whom she was known, now pay that tribute of sorrow to her memory which throws the richest lustre on her life which is past, and is the most precious pretension to felicity in that which is to come. These tears for greatness levelled with the dust, and brought to this universal touchstone of character, surpass any other form of triumph, embalm the soul itself for salvation, and convert the humiliation of death into the exaltation of the only genuine glory!—These tears, hint the uses of subordination as the means of humanizing the mind by the graces of beneficence and gratitude.

But let Christianity share in the praises of this excellent person, since her pious parents trained her to this high measure of virtue by impressing

impressing her with the best habits and principles of religion; yet her very early outset in matrimonial life (in an age like this, with the utmost charms and means to attract and obtain indulgence, and in these *undomestic* times, if I may so express myself) could not justify an intelligent observer in expecting from her such fruits of a Christian education, as must now rank her with as bright a female character as the pen of a religious pastor ever portrayed in the service of Religion.

Conjugal affection, through a long course of years, unchangeable as the course of the sun, but never clouded, shews a sweetness of temper, guarded by candour, good sense, and good principles, which demands the highest praise. On this important grace, more than on any other, depends the peace, the good order, the virtue, and all the attractions of domestic life: here then this grace shone in its utmost lustre, and with all its most delightful and sacred effects.

Singularly tender as was her heart, apt as she might be, and certainly was by nature, to err on the side of indulgence, yet she had ever the most lively sense and wisest view of her maternal duties, and therefore trained her
numerous

numerous children with the most firm and undiverted attention to their most important interests in this life and the next.

Youth here under her superior government was continued simple and innocent, became docile, humble, peaceable, affectionate, upright, and pious ; yet here the requisite discipline, never relaxed, was always found compatible with the requisite indulgence. The behaviour here of a very young and numerous family was such, as to force the *unrelated* witnesses of it to regard the maternal conductor with such blended sentiments of love, esteem, and admiration, that it was difficult to determine which sentiment was the most prevailing.

Whilst in her domestic conduct, in every respect she gave evidence of the best understanding, the best principles, and the most active attention throughout the whole extensive course of her duties ;—yet this strength, this sanctity of mind were displayed with such a serene gentleness, such a perpetual ease and affability that the effect of it was the utmost imaginable domestic order and harmony. She would often note with pity that pragmatistical
bustling

bustling whose cause was folly, and whose effect was confusion.

She had a great and generous soul, full of polished and kind regards, and capable of containing and continuing her attachments to many old and distant friends; she was the most affectionate of relations; and to her neighbours she was so observant of all those courteous attentions which cement good neighbourhood, that when you considered her domestic engagements, you were astonished at the great compass of her intellect, and the generous largeness of her heart.

She had not a tincture of meanness, affectation, and deceit in her character: her native genius and temper soared above this practice and the necessities of it. Her manners bespoke in her all the simplicity of a good and great character. How beautiful then must this simplicity have been, when it was always in alliance with such presence of mind, such purity, and benevolence, that calumny and contention, indecorum, immodesty, and ill-principle would not, such was her genuine innocence, and dared not, such was her unassumed dignity, appear before her.

She

She had no vanity to bring herself forwards in any form, was very well contented to retire into herself, or was equally at liberty to take her share, with the most winning frankness, in the delights of social converse. She was modestly attentive to derive instruction from the most important conversation, was ever willing to encourage it, and therefore never betrayed the dignity and interests of her sex by rejecting those opportunities of superior improvement and instruction which would oftener occur, but for the repulsion of petulance and folly. The truth of good sense and good nature was expressed by her voice, her language, and her countenance:—her countenance was so expressive of all her faculties and virtues, that the remembrance of it must last for ever with those that had ever beheld it. It was a tablet, or picture in miniature, with all the best advantages of Nature's delineation, that very clearly proclaimed a constant union of benevolence and wisdom, of unparading purity, conscious rectitude, and religious cheerfulness.

She had too much firmness, pleasantness, and force of mind to slide into the impotence
of

of querulosity and peevishness ; her benevolence still charmed, still appeared predominant over her other affections, even when occasionally she might not have strength to exert herself with her usual good spirits ; she was averse to the least familiarity of ill-manners with the nearest relations and friends ; and she shewed by her conduct, what she would sometimes avow in words, “ that quarrels of all kinds were as easily avoided, as they were pernicious.” Truly one may say of her *whole* life, that as in her tongue, so in her actions, *was the law of kindness.*

She was distinguished by all that agreeableness in person, temper, understanding, and manners which consists in the happiest mean between excesses on every side respecting body or mind ;—you rejoiced in what she was, and I cannot conceive an instance in which you could wish her to be otherwise than what she was. Her vivacity had no levity, her good sense no rigour, her activity was consistent with composure, in her gentleness you beheld no indolence, and in her tenderness no folly. Her benevolence seemed a habit, and not a momentary effusion of good affection ; and the

the more serious expressions of her excellent understanding seemed to flow from her without the least effort.—Such a character without doubt must have owed much to the gifts of nature; yet I cannot impute this moral harmony of parts, this unbroken consistency of good conduct, to any other principle than the most powerful influence of Religion.

And what I should have conjectured to have been, was, *I know*, the cause—she was a most confirmed Christian, and as her serious and punctual observance of all outward religious ordinances testified the internal frame of her mind, so, it may not be questioned, I will venture to assert, but that, in her secret thoughts, and in her closet, she held that communion with her God which enriched her with all the instructions and ardours that enabled her to make her small circle of life so perfect as to merit the eulogium of many generations to come.

This eulogium, in its just form, and as written in the hearts of her friends, and not in my imperfect attempt to execute it, presupposes for some time the deepest grief in those who derived the greatest pleasure and benefit

benefit from her society and virtue ; but it contains also their amplest source of consolation—for if they look to her with the eyes of disinterested affection, they contemplate her as a conqueror arrived at her goal, and adorned with the most resplendent and unperishable palms of victory.

If they consider themselves in their relation to her, they cannot but hope that the abundant blessings of heaven will be showered upon them from that relation ; they, as long as they live, will find in the cherished remembrance of her example a tender and powerful charge to *do likewise* ;—they will find that her unintermitted exertions, during her heavenly converse with them, have smoothed the way to a resembling virtue in themselves ; and in the possession of that virtue they will see the ground of that re-union with her in heaven, the hopes of which will in time more than compensate for the afflictive sorrow which blackens over the present day, and spreads a gloom of such *wide* extent as will fully excuse, in the pastor and the friend, this feeble attempt to delineate the cause of it.

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